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MEXICAN-AMERICAN STUDY PROJECT. REVISED PROSPECTUS AND INTERIM REPORT.

CALIFORNIA UNIV., LOS ANGELES

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THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN STUDY PROJECT IS CONDUCTING INTERDISCIPLINARY, ANALYTICAL, AND DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH TO EXAMINE THE SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF MEXICAN, SPANISH, AND MIXED INDIAN PEOPLE IN THE URBAN SOUTHWEST (IN 1960 SOME 3 1/2 MILLION). THERE ARE PLANS FOR AN EXTENSIVE INVESTIGATION OF THE EXTENT THAT THESE GROUPS ARE INTEGRATED INTO AMERICAN LIFE AND OF THEIR INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES TO SOCIAL CHANGES DURING THE PROCESS OF INTEGRATION. WORK HAS BEGUN ON A REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE, A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF 1950 AND 1960 CENSUS DATA, AND ON FIELD STUDIES OF DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES TO INVESTIGATE HOW THESE COMMUNITIES FUNCTION FOR THEIR MEXICAN-AMERICAN POPULATION. (NH)

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ABSTRACTED

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University of California, Los Angeles

Mexican-American Study Project

REVISED PROSPECTUS AND INTERIM REPORT

The Mexican-American Study Project was started in February 1964. The project is designed for a three-year period and supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation. This paper supplants the tentative prospectus developed a year ago and presents an interim report.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the study is to examine thoroughly the socio-economic position of people of Mexican, Spanish, or mixed Indian descent in urban areas of the Southwest of the United States. These people are known in different parts of the region under various names such as Mexican-Americans, Spanish-Americans, or Latin-Americans. The Census includes them in the category "white with Spanish surname." Throughout the study, "Mexican-American" is used as a generic term.

While this segment of the population shows a great deal of internal diversity, it is characterized by a common cultural tradition which has left its imprint on the Southwest but has tended to set the Mexican-American minority apart from the rest of the community. The group is also characterized by large numbers of low-income families and individuals with relatively low educational attainments and in low-grade occupations and poor housing. These and other indicators of disadvantage, including exposure to discrimination and prejudice, are among the important subjects of the research project.

For the purpose of the study, the Southwest is defined as comprising the following five states: Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas. It is in these states that the majority of the Mexican-American population, estimated at 3½ million in 1960, is located. Mexican-Americans are almost as highly urbanized as the rest of the population in the Southwest. For this reason, the project is oriented to urban areas, and it concerns itself with rural conditions only to the extent that these bear upon the socio-economic position of Mexican-Americans in cities.

There have been a number of illuminating studies of Mexican-Americans. Most of these have been purely local, with the result that it is impossible to generalize from their findings; or they are written from the viewpoint of a particular academic discipline and therefore of limited scope; or they represent summaries of existing Census or other data and are merely descriptive. Others are out of date.

The new study is more comprehensive in scope. It includes the Southwest as a whole and will reveal the significant local variations in the socio-economic characteristics of the Mexican-American population. It brings the knowledge and skills of several branches of the social sciences to bear on an understanding of the group and its relations to the community-at-large. It attempts to be analytic as well as descriptive. Because the study deals with the problems of adaptation of a minority to the contemporary conditions of American life and with actions and attitudes of the host society vis-a-vis the minority, hypotheses on the acculturation of minority groups generally will be applied to the Mexican-American population. At the same time, the

study is expected to highlight the distinctive features of the Mexican-American minority and of its experience in American society. To the extent that such distinctiveness is found to exist, it may limit the applicability of general theories of acculturation or serve to modify them. This approach will not only advance the state of knowledge but also provide materials more useful for public and private action programs.

Interim Report

The first nine months of the three-year study period were set aside for exploratory work, staffing, the development of the research plan presented earlier, and the initiation of several research operations.

The most important part of the exploratory work was a series of field trips to various urban areas of the Southwest. The purpose was to obtain first-hand impressions of differing settings of the problems, establish preliminary contacts, select urban areas for intensive local studies, review research resources in or near these areas, discover study materials available locally and research work planned or in progress, and get impressions on research needs.

The field tours included some 20 cities in the Southwest as well as Chicago. A total of some 200 unstructured interviews were held with key persons in the Mexican-American communities, government officials, representatives of private organizations, business leaders, and scholars.

In addition, work was started and is continuing on an extensive bibliography and review of the pertinent literature, a comprehensive analysis of 1960 and 1950 Census data, and a number of special studies. Among the subjects of these studies are immigration law and statistics, the preparation of notes on the history of Mexican-Americans in the Southwest, a

methodological review of the Spanish surname technique for identifying Mexican-American individuals, residential segregation, voting behavior of Mexican-Americans, and labor market analysis. Some of these studies are nearing completion.

In recent months the staff work turned to the formulation of the research outline and the field research program which will be described later, the assignment of sub-studies to a number of scholars, and the preparation and review of draft materials.

Organization of the Study

The study is conducted by a special unit, the "Mexican-American Study Project," under the direction of Professor Leo Grebler of the Graduate School of Business Administration at UCLA. Joan Moore, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Riverside, is associate project director. Frank G. Mittelbach is in charge of statistical analysis and data processing. Ralph Guzman, a political scientist, is assistant project director. Mr. Guzman is the only full-time professional staff member. The others serve part-time under arrangements which reduce their teaching load and other University obligations, which is the customary procedure in University research.

The professional staff is supported by three full-time secretaries and a number of part-time research assistants (mostly advanced students). At a recent date, ten research assistants were employed for the Project.

In addition, arrangements have been made or will soon be completed with scholars at UCLA and other institutions for collaboration on various aspects of the study.

A UCLA Faculty Advisory Committee has been established to help guide and review the staff work. The Committee is broadly representative of the major social-science disciplines bearing on the Project. Also, a Los Angeles Community Advisory Committee has been organized as a means of maintaining liaison with the Mexican-American community. This Committee will soon be augmented by representatives from selected other areas in the Southwest.

Research Outline

The research plan, as now formulated, proceeds from a descriptive analysis of the current condition of the Mexican-American population, and historical background materials, to an intensive investigation of the following major questions: How much has this minority been integrated into American society? And how has the Mexican-American individual responded to the social change involved in the process of integration? The principal topics are presented below together with selective comments.

A. The Socio-Economic Condition of the Mexican-American Population in the Southwest

The analysis stresses differences among areas (mainly states, metropolitan areas and cities) and the differentiation within the Mexican-American population itself in terms such as nativity, occupations, income, and generational variations therein. The socio-economic position of Mexican-Americans is compared with relevant reference populations such as other minorities as well as "Anglos." It is also placed in the context of poverty in the United States.

The analysis is based mainly but not exclusively on Census data and emphasizes changes between 1950 and 1960. To obtain greater insights into the socio-economic position of this minority, arrangements have been made for special tabulations from the 1960 Census, and more elaborate statistical techniques are being used to analyze Census data. In addition to the latter, local statistics are being collected on such matters as health and welfare.

B. Growth of the Mexican-American Population

This is the logical place for stressing the differentiation between the descendents of the early colonials, and the 20th Century immigrants and their children. Immigration has been an important source of the growth of the Mexican-American population since about 1910. Consequently, immigration statistics and the laws controlling immigration and their administration are analyzed in this context. Special attention is given to the great variety of migrations across the border, ranging from permanent immigrants to daily commuters and braceros and other agricultural workers in seasonal employment in the United States. While the share of Mexicans in total legal immigration to the United States has increased, emigration relative to Mexico's population seems to have declined. These relationships are examined in light of the "push-and-pull" theory of migration.

The analysis proceeds to changes in the distribution of the Mexican-American population in the United States. The most striking phenomenon here is the persistent concentration in the Southwest. Also, there have been pronounced differentials in the growth rate of the Mexican-American population in the five Southwest states. In addition, major shifts have occurred from rural to urban locations and, subject to further investigation, from smaller to larger cities. Rapid urbanization has compounded the adjustment problems of people distinguished from the host society by cultural characteristics, immigrant status, and language barriers, and often by physical appearance.

The internal migrations involved in these movements and the possibly selective characteristics of locationally mobile Mexican-Americans will be studied to the extent that data permit.

C. Conditions of Contact -- The Historical Perspective

The varying conditions under which Mexican-Americans have come into contact with the host society are presumed to have a lasting and significant bearing on their current socio-economic position, on their self-image and their attitudes toward the dominant group, and the Anglos' image of and their attitudes toward this minority. The analysis of changing conditions of contact between a subordinate group and the majority within a system of power provides us with criteria for selecting historical developments relevant to the purpose of the study, instead of writing the conventional type of historical background.

Cultural and institutional barriers within the Mexican-American community, as well as barriers erected by the majority, may have acted to keep this minority out of the mainstream of our society. On the other hand, some Hispano-Mexican traditions have penetrated Southwest institutions and culture, e.g., legal doctrines pertaining to water-rights, irrigation and other matters, language, architecture, and food.

Among the important recent changes in the conditions of contact are the urbanization of the Mexican-American population; the opening of new horizons and the relatively non-discriminatory experience of this minority in the armed services during World War II; the educational opportunities provided by the G. I. Bill of Rights; the emergence from isolation of important segments of the village populations in northern New Mexico and Colorado; and possibly altered attitudes in the host society itself. Here, the historical treatment merges into the "contemporary" analysis.

D. Integration into American Society

This part is one of the keystones of the analysis. Theoretically, one can conceive of social integration as the full blending of the subordinate and dominant populations. Such blending would permeate the occupational structure, civic and political participation, educational levels, residential locations, and other spheres of life.

Research work in this part of the investigation concerns itself, first, with certain selected general measures of integration (English language facility and use, the naturalization rate of immigrants, degree of residential segregation, and intermarriage).

Second, the study addresses itself to the question how Mexican-American institutions have changed through interaction with the host society. Ethnic organizations ranging from the local to the national level as well as the colonia will be the main subjects of this part of the project.

The third and perhaps the most important sector deals with the integration of the Mexican-American minority into major American institutions. Integration at this point is conceived as a function of interaction between the institutions of the dominant system and the subordinate group. The institutions of the dominant system become differentially accessible to members of the subsystem. The latter may seek access vigorously or even militantly, or they may avoid access, or their institutions may be constituted so as to impede it. This interaction involves dynamic changes. The host society may have become more receptive to Mexican-Americans in some of its institutions though not in others. Members of the subsystem may in the course of time remove some of the self-imposed barriers to integration into the dominant group's institutions.

The main subjects of investigation here are (a) civil rights, (b) political participation and representation, (c) the school systems, and (d) the labor market and its organizations. This is the proper place for dealing, among other things, with discriminatory practices.

Finally, this part of the study will present an interpretation of Mexican-American ideologies, self-conceptions, and value patterns as they have changed in contact with American society.

E. Responses of the Individual Mexican-American to Social Change

The study which in the previous section is focussed on institutions turns here to the individual. This is another keystone of the analysis.

No matter whether the individual has come to modern American society through immigration and its second-generation sequence or from the group of early colonials who were relatively isolated until recent periods, he has faced the problem of responding to the challenges of environmental change. The responses have differed a great deal, ranging from wholesale acceptance of the values of the host society to pathological behavior such as withdrawal or delinquency, and from achievement in terms of the host society to "failure". However, achievement may mean different things in different cultural settings.

It is proposed to analyze the responses to social change by examining first the individual in his setting. Here, individual relationships within the family and kinship system and outside these units require investigation. Next, the analysis is concerned with values and aspiration levels. Finally, we shall examine indicators of pathological behavior, such as mental illness and delinquency and crime, but exercize the caution imposed by the familiar difficulty of interpreting any differential incidence we may detect.

Field Research

In addition to using Census and other data, existing and on-going studies, and governmental reports, the project involves extensive original field research. One of the main purposes of the field work is to obtain insights useful to the analyses outlined in Sections D and E above, that is, the integration of Mexican-Americans into American society and the responses of the individual member of this minority to social change. The field research plans call for the following steps:

1. An intensive study of two large "heartland" communities in the Southwest: Los Angeles and San Antonio. These two localities account for one-quarter of the Mexican-American population in the Southwest. They are major terminals of migration and can be considered political, social, and cultural "capital cities" for Mexican-Americans. Each of these studies will use three separate but related techniques:

(a) A sample interview survey of some 600 Mexican-American households in each city. This survey will collect data on experiences, attitudes and values of respondents, in addition to data on personal and household characteristics. Work on the sample and questionnaire design is now nearly completed.

(b) Two matched subsamples of "high achievers" and "low achievers" will be selected from the interviews in each area. These individuals and their families will be intensively re-interviewed and observed by qualified ethnographers.

(c) In each city, the study will proceed from the data provided in the interviews to a more general description of the community and social structure within which Mexican-Americans of any level of achievement operate.

The field work in Los Angeles will be conducted by the Project staff. Arrangements for the field work in San Antonio are nearing completion.

2. A less intensive study of two "extreme" communities. This will be in the nature of a general community analysis without resort to elaborate, structured survey techniques. One of these cases will be East Chicago, Indiana, representing the Northern, highly industrialized, urbanized, and dynamic type of place in which fairly large numbers of Mexican-Americans have resided for several decades. The other community will be chosen to represent a more agriculturally and traditionally oriented urban area.

These relatively short field studies will be based mainly on field observations and interviews with what may be called "institutional" leaders in the Mexican-American and Anglo communities and other strategic informants. They may also include a number of family cases. The focus will be on understanding how these communities function for their Mexican-American population. The research will examine such matters as the occupational and industrial distribution of the Mexican-American labor force, how the Mexican-American gets a job, how he obtains credit, how and under what conditions he participates in politics, the structure of political influence, what attention he receives from churches, his position vis-a-vis other ethnic and minority groups, his own community organization, the paths of geographic and social mobility which he may follow, and the extent to which the reception of immigrants from Mexico represents a problem to the community and how this problem is handled.

Professors Julian Samora and Richard Lamanna of Notre Dame University will conduct the East Chicago study in the summer of 1965. Negotiations are going forward for the companion study elsewhere.

3. Supplementary studies. We are planning two additional field studies of populations in specific settings, including Anglos and Negroes as well as Mexican-Americans.

(a) A brief questionnaire and attitude instrument administered through the schools in Los Angeles, San Antonio, and a few other cities to Anglo as well as Mexican-American school children. The results should provide useful information on attitudes, perceptions, self-images, through the years of childhood and adolescence, levels of aspirations, and role models.

(b) A short questionnaire survey of parishioners in a selected sample of Catholic and Protestant churches in neighborhoods with differing concentrations of Mexican-Americans.